

Soft bottom

13. Protect shallow soft bottom habitat through proper siting of docks, marinas, and shoreline stabilization structures.
14. Assess the distribution, concentration, and threat of heavy metals and other toxic contaminants in freshwater and estuarine sediments and identify the areas of greatest concern to focus water quality improvement efforts.
15. Evaluate the effects of clam kicking and trawling on soft bottom habitat and bay scallops.

Wetlands

16. Prevent loss of additional riparian wetlands through the permitting process, land acquisition, or land use planning.
17. Restore coastal wetlands to enhance water quality conditions for bay scallops.

10.1.2.2 ISSUE: WATER QUALITY

Suitable water quality is a critical element in the ecology and productivity of estuarine systems. Degradation or improvement in one aspect of water quality may have a corresponding impact on habitat. Maintenance and improvement of suitable estuarine water quality and habitat are probably the most important factors in providing a sustainable bay scallop stock.

The MFC has no regulatory authority over water quality impacts. The MFC and DMF should highlight problem areas and advise other regulatory agencies (EMC, DWQ, DEH – Shellfish Sanitation, Division of Land Resources, COE, and local governments) on preferred options and potential solutions.

The MFC and DMF should continue to comment on activities (state, federal, and local permits) that may impact estuarine water quality and work with permitting agencies to minimize impacts. Additionally, the MFC and DMF should solicit and support FRG projects that may provide information necessary for protection, management, and restoration of water quality. Water quality standards should be based on the assimilative capacity of, and impacts to, the entire system. Several plans for water quality management have recommended strategies that need to be implemented to improve water quality. A strategy should be developed and adopted by the MFC and DENR to accomplish the actions outlined in Section 10.1.2.4, and to assure that recommendations of existing and future water quality plans are addressed in a timely manner. The DENR should develop a strategy to fully support CHPP implementation with additional staff and funding. Water quality protection and restoration are essential to accomplish the goal and objectives of this plan.

Actions would need to be implemented through the cooperative efforts of the N.C. General Assembly and several divisions within the DENR. The involvement of federal agencies and funding may also be needed to accomplish these actions. Many of the following actions were taken directly from the CHPP. Also included in subsection 8.4.2.